

8 December 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Inspector General, CIA

SUBJECT : Forwarding a Complaint to the
Inspector General, United States Army

Background

STATINTL

1. During a conversation on 4 December 1972 with Mr. [REDACTED] of your office, I gave an account of an alleged fabrication of statistics by the US Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) in late 1967.
2. The account concerned a dispute between CIA and MACV over the strength of Viet Cong ground forces in South Vietnam. The dispute had arisen from findings made a year earlier in the CIA that the number of our adversaries in Indo-China had been drastically underestimated. The matter came to a head at an Order of Battle (OB) conference held at MACV headquarters in Saigon in September 1967. CIA was arguing for higher numbers, MACV for lower.
3. According to my information, the circumstances of the fabrication were as follows. Just before the conference opened, a Colonel Norris, aide on the staff of General Davidson (then Chief of MACV intelligence) handed Colonel Hawkins (then head of the MACV Order of Battle section) a piece of paper on which was written a number. Colonel Hawkins was told that the number was the maximum strength that he (assigned to

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uphold MACV's position during the conference) could allow the official Order of Battle to reach. Having been head of the OB Section for over a year and a half, Colonel Hawkins realized that the number was far lower than the actual strength of the enemy force structure, as then defined. However, he was also told to manipulate the components of the OB in any way necessary to keep the overall total below the number on the piece of paper. My information indicates, in fact, that Colonel Hawkins--although scheduled for transfer--had been held over to attend the conference because of his familiarity with, and therefore his ability to manipulate, the Order of Battle.

4. As the conference convened, the dispute between MACV and CIA came to devolve on the OB's components, four in number. MACV used several devices to keep the overall OB within the prescribed bounds. One method was to remove from the official lists at least two large classes of persons who had been in the OB for over six years. A second method was to employ "conservative" methodologies. However, neither device was enough to keep the OB below the paper number.

5. So MACV used a third method. This is how it worked. Whenever it began to come clear that one component was about to rise, orders would pass to lower arbitrarily another component in order to cancel out the gain. Say, for example, the CIA managed to argue successfully for a higher number for Component B. Colonel Hawkins would thereupon order the MACV officers in charge of Component C or Component D to dock their numbers a requisite amount. This happened several times

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during the conference. Among the officers who received orders to lower numbers arbitrarily were a Captain Robinson and a Lieutenant McArthur.

6. As the conference ended, three of the OB's four categories had been arbitrarily adjusted downwards. (The strength of the fourth category--the Main and Local Forces--was not then in dispute.)

7. I do not know who formulated the number on the piece of paper or originated the instructions to Colonel Hawkins to manipulate the components of the Order of Battle. I understand that General Davidson knew of both the number and the orders, but I have no information on whether he thought them up. Likewise, I have heard speculation and what I consider strong circumstantial evidence that the originator was General William Westmoreland, then head of MACV. But on this I have no first-hand information.

8. The source of the information contained in Paragraphs 3-6 above was Colonel Hawkins, now retired and living in West Point, Mississippi. He gave me the account in May of this year after I had flown down there--on my own time and at my own expense--to confirm or allay my continuing suspicions of what had happened at the Saigon conference. Colonel Hawkins has stated his willingness to testify in the event of an inquiry.

9. I would like to make clear at this point that I do not consider Colonel Hawkins ultimately responsible for the fabrications. On the contrary, concerning matters of substance, he was always honest with me

in private, no matter what he had been ordered to do in his official capacity. For example, at a point in the conference when one of his subordinates was arguing that the number of VC guerrillas (one of the four components) was in the neighborhood of 60,000, Colonel Hawkins took me aside at a coffee break to tell me that he thought the real total lay in a range from 100,000 to 120,000. Since at the time I was the only analyst in the CIA researching the Order of Battle, I found Colonel Hawkins' information and opinions invaluable.

10. Although I did not discover until May 1972 the details of the fabrication (as put forth in Paragraphs 3 through 6), it was clear even during the conference what was going on. First, there was the discrepancy over guerrillas mentioned in Paragraph 9. Second, there was the extraordinary behavior of the components, which were popping up and down like pistons. And finally, there was a good deal of surrounding evidence, including conversations, which is too extensive to set down here.

11. As you are aware, I have made known at length my suspicions and what I considered CIA's shortcomings in the matter. They were touched on in extensive oral protests to CIA officials in October 1967, in a detailed written criticism sent to the CIA research hierarchy in November 1967, in a bill of complaints to the CIA Inspector General in May 1968, and in a 35-page memorandum in January 1969, which had been requested by the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board but which the CIA forbade me to send forward.

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Requests

12. After hearing on 4 December some of the details of the alleged fabrication by MACV, Mr. [REDACTED] indicated that the CIA Inspector General ought not to be seized with the problem since it seemed primarily a military matter. However, because of the extreme seriousness of the allegations and the fact that some of the officers involved are still on active duty, the charges should not be dropped, but sent, rather, to a more appropriate forum.

STATINTL

13. Therefore, I respectfully submit three requests:

a) First, that the CIA Director (or his successor) and the CIA Executive Director be given copies of this memorandum and that I be informed, in writing, when this is done.

b) Second, that a copy of this memorandum be forwarded to the Inspector General of the United States Army, and that I be informed, in writing, when this is done.

c) Third, that the Inspector General (IG) of the United States Army be officially informed that I am willing to testify on the matter, and that I be given notice, in writing, when the Army IG is so informed.

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14. I respectfully await your [REDACTED]

Samuel A. Adams

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